



NEWS RELEASE

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APRIL 3, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GUATEMALAN NATIONAL SENTENCED FOR CONSPIRING TO TRANSPORT ILLEGAL ALIENS, ILLEGALLY RE-ENTERING U.S.

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Bradley J. Schlozman, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that a Guatemalan national has been sentenced in federal court for conspiring to transport illegal aliens within the United States and to illegally re-entering the United States following a fatal collision near Columbia, Mo., in which five persons died.

Gelson Omar Mancilla-Santiago, 23, a citizen of Guatemala, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey on Friday to four years and three months in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered **Mancilla-Santiago** to pay \$13,775 in restitution.

Mancilla-Santiago pleaded guilty on Aug. 10, 2005, to participating in a conspiracy to operate a business of transporting illegal aliens in the United States. **Mancilla-Santiago** also pleaded guilty to illegally re-entering the United States after having been deported.

Mancilla-Santiago, who had been deported from the United States on Oct. 25, 2004, admitted to his role in the conspiracy to operate a business of transporting illegal aliens from at least as early as May 2005 to June 19, 2005, in Missouri as well as California and Virginia. Conspirators arranged to pick up illegal aliens and transport them from one location to another within the United States, Schlozman said, charging the illegal aliens a fee for their transportation.

Mancilla-Santiago was contacted by a person to drive a van from Los Angeles, Calif., to New York. On June 18, 2005, the person who contacted **Mancilla-Santiago** provided him with a van and money, and more than 17 illegal aliens were loaded into the van.

On June 19, 2005, the van (carrying more than 17 illegal aliens) crossed the state line into Missouri and was involved in a traffic accident near Columbia, in which five persons were killed.

Mancilla-Santiago admitted that he shared in the driving with another person, Schlozman said, but **Mancilla-Santiago** claimed that he was not driving the van at the time of the accident.

Schlozman added that the van had been previously involved in transporting another load of illegal aliens to Virginia.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony P. Gonzalez. It was investigated by the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow